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 Activities of the Soviet Army under
 Combat Conditions

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1. The "Til" (rear area or communication zone) was the weakest part of the Soviet Army. The Soviet Government would not inform the Army General Staff exactly whether the "Til" organization should be based on the use of horses or of trucks. Naturally the "zveno" (supply circle) varies in length depending upon the means of transportation and also differs in number of supply points. For example, if horses were utilized, shorter distances would be covered and the Army might have to employ army, divisional, and regimental points. On the other hand, if trucks were employed, the distance would, of course, be greater and perhaps there would be only army and regimental points. The Government claimed, of course, that sufficient trucks would be available. The Army General Staff when it was under Marshal Tukhachevsky prior to his execution in 1937 was superior to the staff which followed later and the earlier staff knew that the above question was a major problem. The most recent manual which had been published on supply transportation (Nastavlenie po Ustroistvu i Sluzhbe Tila) was published in 1929. It was, therefore, out of date, as in that year the Soviet Army consisted basically only of infantry, artillery, and cavalry and moreover had no trucks. Major (fnu) Vaganov was a senior instructor on "Til" matters at the Frunze Military Academy in Moscow. In 1935 or 1936 the major wrote a good compromise textbook (uchebnik). It was utilized in the military academies and the military schools. This textbook gave several possible solutions to "Til" problems. Incidentally, Vaganov was arrested in 1937 but was released in January 1940, returned to Frunze, and was promoted to the rank of colonel.

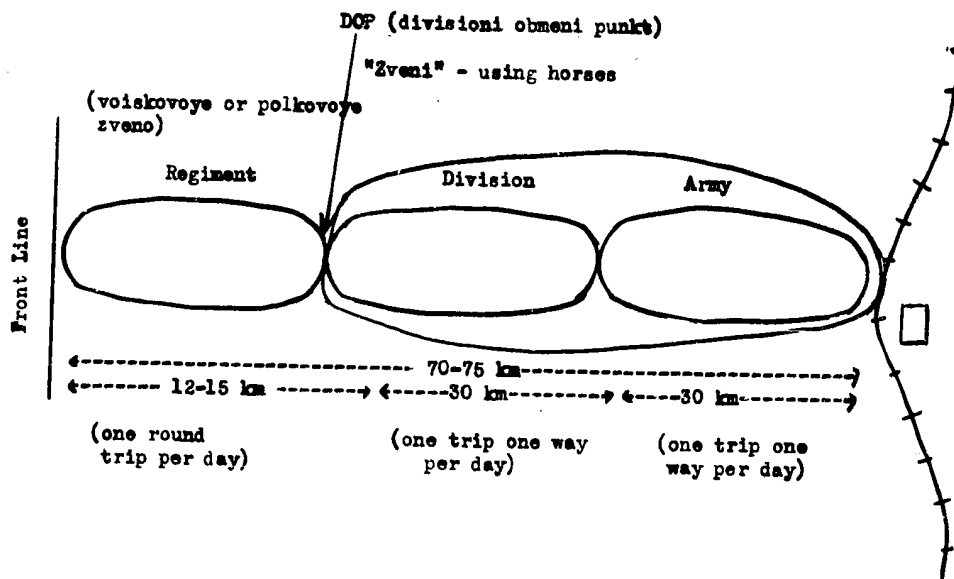
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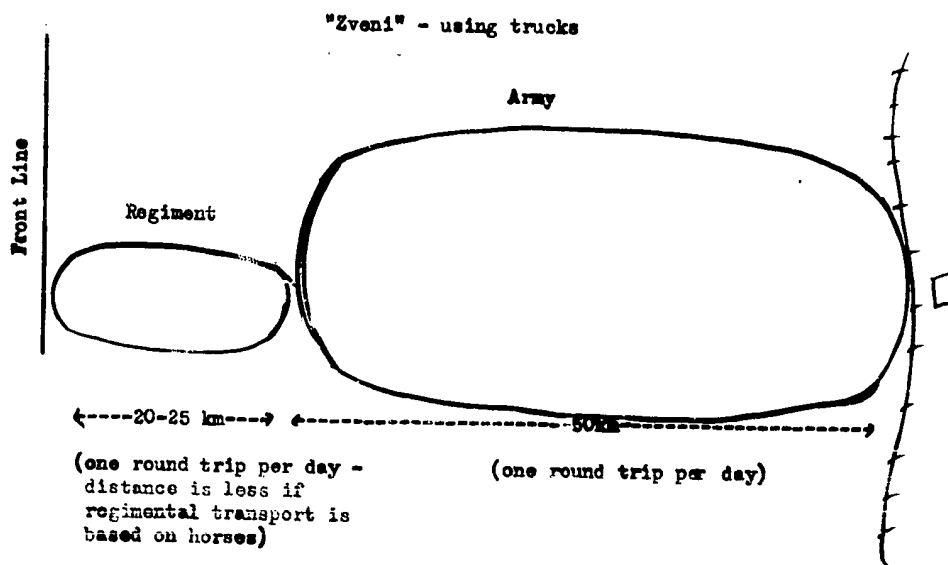
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2. The rough sketch below indicates one method of organizing supply circles as far as distance was concerned. This presupposes that horses are utilized.



3. The following rough sketch indicates organization of supply circles if trucks are utilized.



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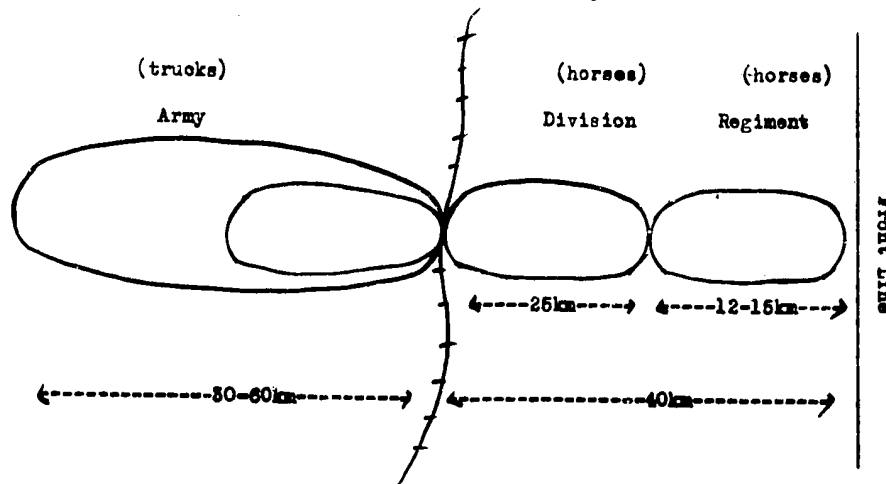
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4. The following rough sketch indicates the system of supply circles considered most desirable by the Soviet Army and depends upon use of both trucks and horses. This system takes into account the poor Soviet roads and the lack of trucks, which was certainly true in the early 1940's at least.

System of "Zveno" considered best by the Army



If the railroads are near, then one might not use the army "zveno". If troops advance further from the railroad, one can then begin to use the army supply circle and expand its length up to 60 km. If, during the advance, horses had been used to such an extent, because of poor roads, that they were very tired and then the units reached an area of better roads, one could move the trucks up to the divisional "zveno" and rest the horses. However, the Soviet Government said "no" to such a solution because it assumed as a certainty that the USSR would have trucks at its disposal and would be fighting on enemy territory where the roads were better.

6. The following may give an example of the problems faced in regard to the "Til". In July 1941, three new Soviet armies were formed in Moscow. One of these was given 300 trucks for each of the six infantry divisions which were included in the army. One hundred of each 300 trucks were $2\frac{1}{2}$ ton vehicles. The other 200 were $1\frac{1}{2}$ ton trucks, which were the basic Soviet army trucks. Out of the 300 trucks, only about 30 or 35 were three axle vehicles, (similar to the US $2\frac{1}{2}$ ton 6 x 6 truck). The three axle trucks were utilized only for the purpose of pulling artillery pieces. When the army moved forward to Smolensk, it still had to obtain its supplies from Moscow, which was 320 km away, one way. As a result, there were not enough trucks even though the army was not in combat at that time and the divisions initially numbered only 7,600 men each. On 1 Sep 41 the divisions became 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ thousand men each and the number of trucks became even less adequate. Staff cars were normal passenger vehicles, which had been rubbed with dirt to make them less conspicuous. There were 30 staff cars per division and this was quite adequate. Each division had 150 or 200 bicycles to be used for

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reconnaissance and by messengers. Initially, no horses were provided. However, in September 1941, all the required horses were obtained. At this time the regimental "zveno" became based on horses and the army "zveno" on trucks. This was a practical organization. However, it should be pointed out that although the army had 100% of the horses it needed, it had only 50% of the required wagons (pavoski), only 25% of the needed harness, and 0% saddles. Obviously, only 25% of the horses could be used. The army was suffering from these disadvantages when in October 1941 the Germans attacked. The attack destroyed the army, and only one half of a division and the army staff escaped. All the rest were encircled and captured. The army was later reformed from new personnel.

6. It should be remembered that supply system characteristics of the Soviet Army will differ greatly for operations on Soviet and Polish soil, or for operations in Western Europe. In the USSR, the supply system would use railroads to a great extent and would utilize them as close to the front as possible. It would have to use horses because of lack of roads. Regimental supply must be horse drawn in that country if mobility is desired at all times of the year. Otherwise, snow and rain would stall military units. It should be recalled that there are roughly 15 good motor roads, with the necessary bridges, in a country like West Germany for one road in the USSR. If one attempted to use trucks for regimental supply then one should use the lightest possible trucks (one ton) and ones having good passability characteristics. Trucks larger than 2½ tons should not be used.
7. In regard to the question of repair facilities, only artillery repair shops were fairly well organized in the Soviet Army. These were located near army artillery dumps.
8. As becomes apparent from my account, above, about the experiences of one of the Soviet armies formed in Moscow, the period June 1941 - June 1942 was one of improvisation. Horses were utilized more extensively in the south than near Moscow. Nowhere were there to be found more than the two "zveni", one for army and one for regiment. Military operations in the Ukraine utilized horses for both "zveni". Therefore, troops could not very well operate further than from 37 to 40 km away from a railway line; 25 km would be the length of an army supply circle and 12 km for the regimental. As can be seen, therefore, the 430 thousand trucks provided by the US as Lend-Lease material were absolutely vital to Soviet military operations.
9. There were no supply dumps (skladi) in division. There were only supply dumps in army and regiment. During most of World War II there were no corps in the Soviet Army. A regiment received only what it would consume during one or two days or what it would need in combat.
10. Basically then, all supply operations in the Soviet Army during World War II were improvised in an attempt to adjust to early defeats, lack of equipment, lack of planning, and the course of the war. For example, the Germans had air superiority in 1941 and 1942. Therefore, each army had several dumps located at various railway stations instead of just one army dump. Each service also had its own dumps, for dispersal purposes. There was some consolidation of supply dumps toward the end of World War II because the German Air Force was less feared. Usually an army would deliver supplies direct to a regiment. Later, however, "DOP" was quite often used. A "DOP" (Divisional Obshchiy Punkt) was a

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divisional supply exchange point. It was located in a rear area of a division where army would deliver supplies and the various regiments would pick up the supplies. Earlier in World War II, an army did not have its own trucks and merely delivered supplies to the nearest railway station, where divisional trucks would pick up the material and deliver it to regimental supply points, as the division did not have its own supply dumps. Later army took over the trucks from divisions. This was a better distribution of vehicles. Otherwise, if it were necessary to transfer a division from one army to another, it would require the use of too large a number of railway cars. In the USSR, operations depend very much on the use of railways. The Soviet Army depends extensively on quick repair of damaged railway lines and is experienced in this type of work.

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